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(56) Documents Cited
GB 2072395 A GB 1278208 A GB 1242298 A

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(71) Applicant(s)
JPM (Automatic Machines) Limited
(Incorporated in the United Kingdom)
Hadfield Road, Lockwith Trading Estate, Cardiff,
CF1 8AQ, United Kingdom

(74) Agent and/or Address for Service

Wynne-Jones, Lainé & James
Morgan Arcade Chambers, 33 St Mary Street,
CARDIFF, CF1 2AB, United Kingdom

(72) Inventor(s)
Colin Crossman
Richard Grocott
David Michael Boucher
Richard Morgan McCormack
Paul Daniel Smith

(54) Gaming or amusement with prizes machines

(57) A fruit machine is incorporated with a pinball game which is enabled when the reels (5) present certain winning symbol combinations. These reels may show through windows in the table (4) of the pinball game.

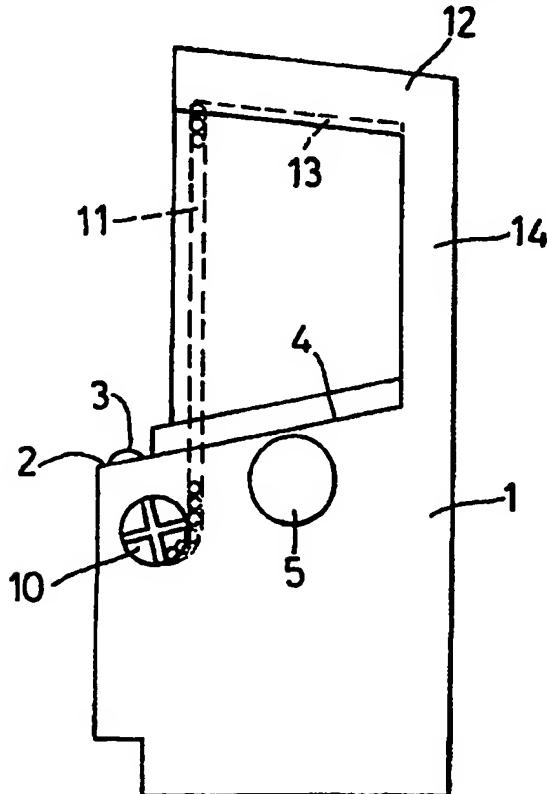


Fig. 1

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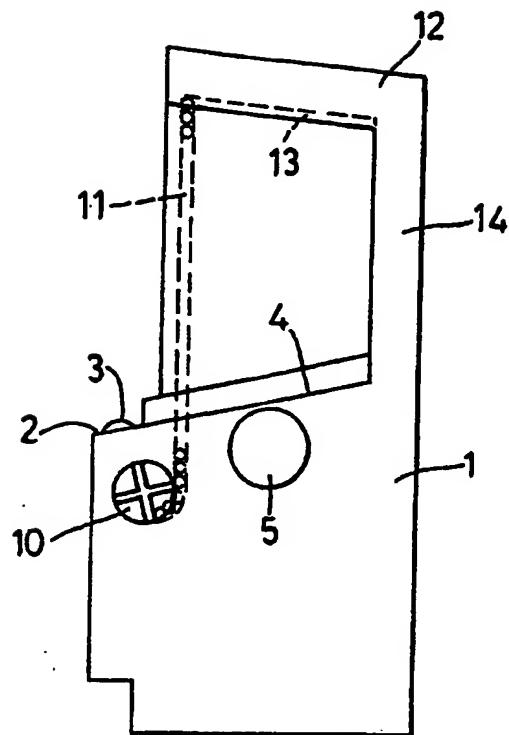


Fig. 1

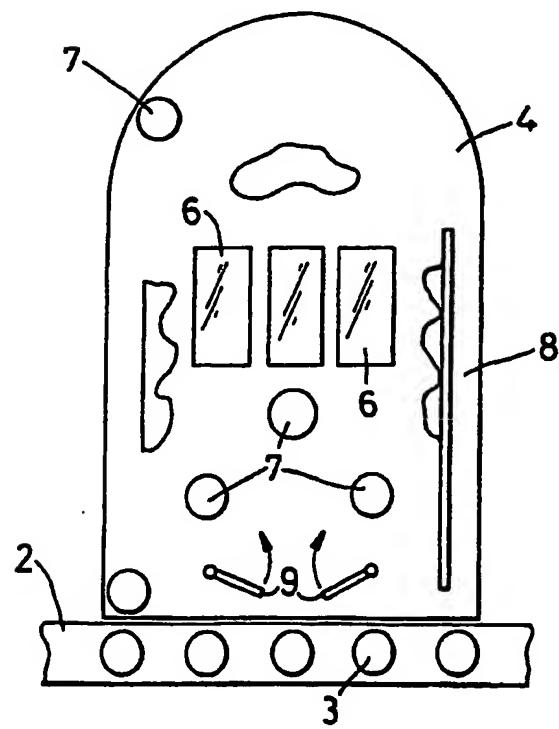


Fig. 2

"Improvements relating to Gaming or
Amusement with Prizes Machines"

This invention relates to gaming or amusement with prizes machines. It is concerned with the kind known as 5 fruit machines in which a plurality of reels or their equivalents are rotated and stop in a random fashion with a selection of symbols showing through respective windows, certain combinations of symbols on a line generating prizes. Often, the prize offered is not a return of the stake 10 multiplied but the opportunity to play the machine further using a feature other than the reels. Such machines have proved very popular, and there is a constant search to find new features to attract the interest of the players.

According to the present invention there is provided a 15 gaming or amusement with prizes machine having a plurality of reels or their equivalents which are rotated and stop in a random fashion with a selection of symbols showing through respective windows, certain combinations of symbols on a line generating prizes, and further incorporating a pinball 20 game, wherein at least one of said prizes is the enablement of the pinball game.

In one preferred form the pinball game table contains the windows through which the reels are visible.

To provide for reasonably frequent use of the pinball 25 game a plurality of said prizes may enable it, some giving more plays than others.

The pinball game could be automatically triggered when

a suitable prize is awarded but it is preferably player-operated, including means to fire the ball initially, and means to keep the ball in play. Also, the pinball game may be enabled to be played by at least one prize with more than 5 one ball.

The manual control of the player may not be direct but through a switch which actuates a firing device such as a solenoid. The means for keeping the ball in play will generally take the form of gates at the bottom of the 10 sloping table which can be "flipped" by the player pressing respective buttons. However, the space between the gates will be such that it is inevitable that at some point the ball will escape through them and thus finish the game.

The table will be equipped with various obstructions 15 many of which will incorporate switches which are closed when hit by a ball. Each will register a score, which is progressively totted up.

There needs to be a return path for balls having gone out of play to be available for subsequent plays. A ball 20 played on the pinball game is conveniently gravity led to the bottom of a duct containing a plurality of further balls leading from below to above the table. There can then be means associated with the duct for pushing the just played ball into the bottom of the duct and thereby causing the 25 ball at the upper end, pushed by all the other balls, to be delivered back to the table for play. The delivery path from the upper end of the duct to the table may be at least partially visible to a player in a playing position, and

this visible part is preferably tortuous or labyrinthine. The passage of the ball is thus lengthened and is more likely to draw attention to the machine.

For a better understanding of the invention, one embodiment will now be described, with reference to the accompanying drawing, in which:

Figure 1 is a diagrammatic vertical section through a fruit machine incorporating a pinball game, and

Figure 2 is a plan view of the pin table forming part 10 of the machine.

The machine has a cabinet 1 which is floor standing and in some respects similar to that of a conventional fruit machine, having a shelf 2 with control buttons 3 along the front at about waist height. However, instead of then 15 extending upwards with a slight backwards slope, there is a very substantial recess extending almost to the back of the cabinet 1. Below a glass surface leading from the shelf 2 there is a pin table 4 as shown in Figure 2.

Within the cabinet 1 and below the pin table 4 there 20 are three side-by-side reels 5 with symbols around their circumferences in normal fruit machine fashion. The way they are rotated is conventional, and there may be "hold" and "nudge" features governed by some of the buttons 3. Parts of the circumferences of the reels 5 are visible through 25 windows 6 set into the pin table 4 and flush with its surface. The pin table is also equipped with various upstanding obstructions 7 some of which have switches, as mentioned above, by which a score is totted up. Each ball is

fired up a channel 8 on the right hand side as seen in Figure 2, this being initiated by pressing one of the buttons 3 when the feature is enabled. Near the lower edge of the pin table there are hinged gates 9, under the control 5 of two of the buttons 3, which can be flipped to bat a ball rolling onto them back into play. But they are spaced apart so that a ball can pass freely through them. If it does so, it is then out of play and is channelled by gravity to a return mechanism below the pin table 4.

10 The return mechanism is a paddle wheel 10, each paddle entraining an out-of-play ball. At each play, this wheel is indexed round to push a ball into a conduit 11 already filled with balls and which curves up to a hood 12 over the recess in the cabinet. There, the conduit delivers the balls 15 into a sloping channel 13 and so each ball rolls down to the back of the recess and then follows a path, preferably visible to the player and tortuous or labyrinthine, down the back wall 14. It is then available for future play.

20 This pinball game is available when certain winning combinations of symbols appear in the windows 6 after the fruit machine has been played, perhaps with "hold" and "nudge" operations to achieve this. A prize may be awarded at this stage in addition to the opportunity to play the pinball game, and further prizes may be awarded when the 25 player achieves certain scores with the pinball feature.

Although it may have been assumed that the pinball feature is played with one ball at a time, it would be possible to have more than one in play simultaneously.

Also, there could be alternatives to having the reels below the table. They may be positioned elsewhere, and they could be simulated on a video screen.

Claims

1. A gaming or amusement with prizes machine having a plurality of reels or their equivalents which are rotated and stop in a random fashion with a selection of symbols showing through respective windows, certain combinations of symbols on a line generating prizes, and further incorporating a pinball game, wherein at least one of said prizes is the enablement of the pinball game.
5
2. A machine as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the pinball game table contains the windows through which the reels are visible.
10
3. A machine as claimed in Claim 1 or 2, wherein a plurality of said prizes enable the pinball game, some giving more plays than others.
4. A machine as claimed in Claim 1, 2 or 3, wherein the pinball game is player-operated, including means to fire the ball initially, and means to keep the ball in play.
15
5. A machine as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the pinball game is enabled to be played by at least one prize with more than one ball.
20
6. A machine as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein a ball played on the pinball game is gravity led to the bottom of a duct containing a plurality of further balls leading from below to above the table, there being means 25 associated with the duct for pushing the just played ball into the bottom of the duct and thereby causing the ball at

the upper end, pushed by all the other balls, to be delivered back to the table for play.

7. A machine as claimed in Claim 6, wherein the delivery path from the upper end of the duct to the table is 5 at least partially visible to a player in playing position.

8. A machine as claimed in Claim 7, wherein the visible part of the delivery path is tortuous or labyrinthine.

9. A gaming or amusement-with-prizes machine substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the 10 accompanying drawing.

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Patents Act 1977
 Examiner's report to the Comptroller under Section 17
 (The Search report)

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Search Examiner
 G NICHOLLS

Date of completion of Search
 14 FEBRUARY 1994

Databases (see below)

(i) UK Patent Office collections of GB, EP, WO and US patent specifications.

(ii) ONLINE DATABASE: WPI

Documents considered relevant following a search in respect of Claims :-
 1-9

Categories of documents

X:	Document indicating lack of novelty or of inventive step.	P:	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of the present application.
Y:	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of the same category.	E:	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of the present application.
A:	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.	&:	Member of the same patent family; corresponding document.

Category	Identity of document and relevant passages		Relevant to claim(s)
X	GB 2072395 A	(KENNEDY) See page 1 lines 16-26	1
X	GB 1278208	(BELL-FRUIT) See page 1 lines 53-59	1
X	GB 1242298	(PHONOGRAPHIC TECHNICAL) See page 1 lines 79-84, page 2 lines 1-21	1

Databases: The UK Patent Office database comprises classified collections of GB, EP, WO and US patent specifications as outlined periodically in the Official Journal (Patents). The on-line databases considered for search are also listed periodically in the Official Journal (Patents).